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## **20 Ways to Connect with Your Kids during Deployment**

Filed under [Community Support](#), [Corpsman](#), [Fleet and the Fleet Marine Force](#) {[no comments](#)}



*By U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs*

Kids of all ages have lots of questions about deployment and what it means for the parent who is away.

It's especially important for their questions to be answered openly, honestly and calmly.

### **Some practical pointers**

1. Encourage your kids to ask questions
2. Use language suitable to the age and development level of each kid when answering their questions
3. Let your kids know that their thoughts and feelings are important to you
4. If your kid has trouble verbalizing thoughts, suggest another way of expression, such as drawing, telling stories or playing with puppets
5. Keep routines as consistent and predictable as possible; kids are reassured by structure and familiarity
6. Let kids be kids. Even in times of war, kids need to play, laugh and continue to grow and learn

### **Tips for all ages**

#### **Early childhood**

7. Be calm around babies and toddlers
8. Keep to your normal routine as much as possible

## **Pre-school**

9. Setting and sticking to bedtimes is very important; bed-time rituals (such as reading stories or tuck-ins) are vital
10. Give kids lots of hugs and physical reassurance

11. Safety is a real concern for this age group. Reassure youngsters that adults are in charge and will keep them safe

## **Elementary school**

12. Be open. Ask your kids if they have any questions and answer them without overreacting
13. Spend extra time together to provide additional reassurance
14. Limit television use and continue normal routines, especially at bedtime

## **Middle school**

15. Kids this age are extremely aware of their surroundings, so encourage them to talk about their feelings
16. Remember not to burden them with any fears you might be experiencing
17. Use historical examples — the Civil War or World War II, for example — to provide kids with a sense of hope and to explain how the United States has survived very difficult times in the past

## **High school**

18. Some teens make jokes, so remember that humor can be a way to cope with difficult emotions they might be experiencing
19. Be open and allow them to express their feelings in different ways
20. Teens are focused on the events in their own lives. They might not want to talk about the deployment at all. Encourage conversation but don't force it

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